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## IMPORTANT MOVEMENTS IN ISRAEL PRIOR TO 1000 B. C.

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*The migrations of the patriarchs.— The settlement in Egypt.— The independence movement.— The religious movement.— The settlement movement.— The downgrade movement.— The prophetic movement.— The monarchical movement.*

THE life of a nation as that of an individual falls into epochs. The characterization of these epochs will be a sketch of that life from its incipency to its close. This will portray in appropriate colors its elemental beginnings, its striking growths and its best fruitage. It will also give an estimate of the elements of power which are added in each new period to increase future strength and efficiency.

As a people Israel followed a zigzag pathway down through antiquity. It was also beset by unnumbered difficulties of various kinds. It led through daring and danger, through woes and foes, through knavery and slavery, through water, waste, and war into the promised land. Once here, Canaan on the right of them, on the left of them, in front of them, and among them rallied and plundered. Tempted and tortured and trodden down, Israel sighed and cried unto the Lord. Repentance and deliverance came hand in hand. But the stain was ingrained, and the scar was left. Only through the might of prophetic insight was a genuine advance assured. The sudden expansion and extension of Israel set the sun of prosperity in her zenith.

In this brief discussion there is no space, and it is unnecessary, to examine the critical analysis of the sources of information. Besides, only the most radical positions affect the main facts in the important movements in Israel prior to 1000 B.C. The gratuitous hypotheses of such writers as Stade (*Gesch.*

*d. V. Israel*) are their own refutation. Their arbitrary norm or test applied to the narrative of the Old Testament can never commend itself to sober, impartial historical study. The contemporaneous history is amply elaborated in the adjoining articles, and shall receive only hints here and there by this writer. While the citation of authorities on this period might easily fill one-third of each page, the space will be more profitably occupied, it is hoped, by the discussion proper.

I. *Patriarchal movement*.—Migration and transplantation are often potent in nourishing and developing latent abilities and powers. When Abram cut loose from Ur of the Chaldees, he left behind him many commonplace circumstances above which he might never have arisen. But once weaned from home, at God's call, he went westward to a place which he knew not of. But he was not among a strange people; they were of his own blood and tongue. From Haran he followed divine directions at the head of his band, and reached Shechem, where his zeal for Jehovah materialized into an altar (Gen. 12:7) to the true God. Faith led him thus far, and faith now expanded into sight, of a land for his own posterity. This growing faith fruited into another altar at Bethel (Gen. 12:8). Having viewed the land from this sacred spot, he passed on down to the South country. The gnawings of famine and the granaries of the Nile drove him to Egypt—probably in the period of the prosperities of the XIIth dynasty. After some time he returned with royal favors and flocks, the wiser for his experience and the richer for his future. Up through the vales and dales of the



STATUE OF GUDEA, FROM TELLO  
ABOUT 2800 B. C.

Palestinian hills he led the van of his clan. On the summit of these rolling mountains, a kind of watch-tower, he pitched his tent, not far from the altar already built. Magnanimous soul! to quell the quarrel between their herdsmen, Abram set the choice of mountain and plain before his nephew Lot. Into the valley of Sodom, "like a garden of the Lord," rushed the plunger. Now to the apex of the highest point in southern Palestine, Hebron, good Abram carried his tent, and piled up by its side another altar to his God. Soon the sound of battle echoed through the mountains. A crying courier told of the raid made by the four kings of the East. From Bashan to Seir, from Kadesh to the sea, only a wild waste marked their trail. Back they turned to the rebel cities of the valley of salt. Four kings against five! Might that never makes right rushed in and crushed the insurgents and carried off goods and captives as booty. But the patriarch was a match for the Babylonian raiders. Familiar with their army tactics, he resolved on pursuit. With his own trained warriors and his confederates he sped to the north and under cover of night swooped down upon their camp. Complete defeat scattered the foe, and Abram recovered the plunder and the people of Sodom. On his return the supernal king of Salem greeted him with supreme blessings. Years rolled by and Abram feared extinction, but the promise was repolished, the future brightened. The rite of circumcision was given as the seal of the everlasting covenant of Jehovah (Gen. 17), an ever-present pledge of perpetuity and possession. Abram became Abraham, the one shall become a multitude, and doubt ripened into certainty. Thus the Chaldean (from Ur), the head of his band, acting under God's direction, was morally tried, toughened, and tempered by his contact and clash with Chaldean, Canaanite, Egyptian and Amorite. Large-hearted, true-hearted, stately, princely, generous, pious, Abraham was an ideal "father of a multitude of nations." As a final test of the fiber of his faith, God ordered him to slay Isaac on an altar. With unremitting obedience, in intention the act was done, but in fact was stayed. Faith's battle was done and the patriarch won.

Isaac's course was over a smooth sea with coast lines always in view. Few wavelets struck the keel of his vessel, and fewer test-storms of his trust are recorded. But Jacob, the heeler, was true to his name. Heir to a tissue of strong character, with a confidence born of self and a knowledge of the weakness of others, Jacob purposed to make the most of life. Hungry Esau, at the point of starvation, pawned off his birthright to the youthful pawnbroker. Masked for a blessing, Jacob deluded old Isaac and eluded the wrath of Esau.

Up over the hills of Hebron he hied him. At Bethel—sacred spot—he lay down for the night. Visions of glory wrested from him a pledge. On to Paddan Aram he fled and lighted upon the lands of one Laban. Enamored of his tawny daughters, Jacob paid the hire of the hands of two of them by fourteen years of herding. "Iron sharpens iron," Laban sharpened Jacob. His shrewdness absorbed nearly all of Laban's flocks, and to secure his gains, the "heeler" decamped with herd and house toward the south. Word ran ahead to Esau in Seir, "The 'heeler' is coming." Armed men rushed to the front but are met by a peace commission. Jacob was in anguish, in terror, and secured from a heavenly wrestler his request. He is a changed man, a new man, a brother, not a supplanter, Israel, not Jacob.

These days of trickery and trade, of labor and love, of fear and fervor, rounded up the character of the great patriarch. The insolence of his sons, the sorrows of death, and the dependence of age, mollified his harshness of spirit, and beautified his declining years.

II. *The Egyptian movement.*—Canaan was the roaming land of the shepherd-sons of Jacob. Across this isthmus the great civilizations of the East and West were tied by commercial lines of travel. Caravans crept reptile-like up through valleys, over ridges, across plains to barter their wares, and garner reserves. They trafficked in slaves, and transported them from land to land. To these dealers Joseph is sold and carried down into Egypt—the kite carrying the first small string across the chasm of Niagara, which resulted in the suspension bridge. Inflexible integrity carried him through slander and prison to a seat beside

the Pharaoh. God-endowed and God-sent he wielded his power with unswerving equity, and took long glances into the future. In years of plenty he prepared for want, storing Egypt with seven years' surplus of grain. As relentless as fate the famine came on. The annual stores gone, a cry went up from all the land. Adjoining lands felt the nibblings of hunger, and all feet turned toward the grain bins of Egypt. Among the caravans of the East appeared the original salesmen of Joseph. Quick as a flash the Premier knew them. With tenderness encased in gruffness he received, deceived, and dismissed them. In a second trip Joseph buffeted them, but the pathos of Judah broke his hard exterior, and he flashed before them as Joseph, their brother. Consternation, remorse, penitence, affection stare from the eyes of the brethren. Joseph's love and power encircled the whole tribe and drew it affectionately to the land of plenty. The Israelite caravan was met by Joseph, and under the favor of the throne-power it was allotted the fat of the land, the land of Goshen. Here under royal protection the families emerged into tribes, named after the twelve sons of Israel. Long years full of prosperity and posterity rolled on, when a "new king [or dynasty] arose who knew not Joseph," regarded not the original rights of the Hebrews. The hated Semites were seized, and put under the yoke of serfdom, probably in the XIXth dynasty. Taskmasters lashed them to their burdens, and made life bitter with hard bondage. But their rapid increase threatened the peace of the reigning king. Mortal measures were adopted to suppress the despised people. Evasion of orders, and intervention of Jehovah were a buffer to the execution of the royal edict. The most precious jewel rescued from destruction, was Moses. Found, fondled, and fostered by Pharaoh's daughter, he was reared as a king's son, and "instructed in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians." Though fully versed in the life, literature, and learning of that great people, he forgot not the God of his fathers, nor the bitter bondage of his brethren. With premature zeal—John Brown-like—he attempted single-handed to break off their shackles. Fear within and fury without made him a refugee in the wilderness. For forty years more he is learning wisdom,

but *this* time the wisdom of God through intimate communion with him. His sweet companionship with him mellowed his soul and enriched his life and built him for the future. At a given sign and call he was commissioned to return to Egypt to open the doors of freedom. Aaron was made his mouthpiece, and God his director. The limits of the sojourn were not far off, and the slaves must be freed.

The vast import of the Egyptian sojourn must be mentioned in few words. Egypt was the leading great nation of that day, in literature, art, science, and government. The future of Israel as a conservator of God's revelation and will demanded that she be fully equipped for her all-important service. In her Egyptian home she learned to know Egyptian life. In her bondage she was compelled to learn the industries, arts, and civilities of this leading nation. She was thus schooled among the first and foremost teachers of early times.



HARPER AND CHOIR, FROM  
TELLO. 3000 B. C.

### III. *The independence movement.*

—Moses and Pharaoh met face to face. Requests were refused, and threats thrust aside. In close succession, interrupted only by calls, promises, and perfidies of the king, followed plague upon plague. Every plague-stroke cut deeper into the flesh, but only the sword of the death angel compelled concession and cut the bonds of the slaves. Pharaoh's mingled cry of distress and anger rang like a trumpet throughout the land, and Israel focalized her forces on the eastern border line. But royal grief soon found relief in swift pursuit. Hemmed in by mountain, sea, and troops, the fugitives were in dismay. But God and cloud guard rear and van, and by com-

mand of wind and storm the sea rolls back. The door of liberty swings open and through it rush the freedmen. At their heels rolled the wheels of Egyptian arms. But mercy's door closed against them, and the seas' waves over them. Three million souls loose, free as the air, out of the reach of the master's lash. But barbarians they were not. Servitude and oppression had stunted independence, but had not barbarized them. Even contact with Egypt's greatness, as that of servants in a palace, gave them an invaluable training in the elements of an independent people. Organization into a nation was the next step. Evidence is in favor that tribal distinctions were maintained in Egypt. In the desert each tribe was organized, encamped, and treated as a separate body. By Jethro's help the judiciary was formed, with Moses as the judge supreme under God's headship. Of course of discontents there are always enough to stir up strife. But Amalek met loyal, if not royal, arms, and was led to respect the power of the "barbarians." On by Sinai Israel marches, gaining, growing by the way. Step by step the stair was climbed; but a plateau was reached. Grumbings and rumblings called a halt. "The flesh-pots of Egypt!" Not a whiner shall see the promised land. Kadesh shall see the death of full one generation. Through all the two-score years of desert life the Egypt-enchanted grumblers passed away, and the younger generation was trained for the chosen people.

IV. *The religious movement.*—Hints at certain religious rites are found before the Exodus. Moses' education in the desert, and his instruction of his own people show forth God as Jehovah (Ex. 6:2, 3), the existent, living One. This Jehovah is the deliverer, the leader, and the instructor of Israel. Moses is his agent only. Out in the desert the peoples are rallied at Sinai. Here the chosen leader, amid the thunders of the rocky summit, communes with Jehovah, receives and delivers to Israel the divine charter of the new nation, the law. This was to be the center, the hub, the real distinction between Israel and her polytheistic neighbors. With the tabernacle as her rallying point and the law as her charter and Moses as her divinely chosen leader, Israel had the fundamentals for binding her together as a nation.



V. *The settlement movement.*—A detour from the desert brought this youthful and forceful people up to the gates of the promised land, guarded by Amorite warriors. A peaceful passage refused, Israel meets an Amorite army, only to deplete and defeat its ranks. One more desperate battle captures the east of the Jordan. The veteran nobleman, Moses, now leaves his last will and testament, takes a Pisgah-view of the lands and vanishes into the unseen. The tried hero, Joshua, takes command. The hearts and spirits of the Canaanites melt before the unconquered conquerors. Under divine orders they cross the Jordan and draw up in battle line. Strict obedience and prompt action are the conditions of conquest. Jericho falls at the blast of trumpets. Israel falls before the swords of Ai. The fateful lot unveils the offender in Achan. Severe and summary punishment crushes the incipient infraction, and Joshua soon secures the mountain passes. On to Shechem they march, where blessings and curses are read and reviewed, echoed and reëchoed from mountain to mouth, from mouth to mountain. With doubly charged zeal the warriors in the spirit of the command of Jehovah wheel about to the south. Wily Gibeon beats Joshua, but are themselves afterwards beaten as slaves to the end of their days. In defending them Joshua precipitates the Waterloo of his campaign. In rapid succession, throughout the south, fortress, city, and village fall before the reaper of death in the hands of Israel. In the far north a confederacy of petty kings amass their forces at Merom. But Joshua, by a forced march, struck them unawares, routed them, maimed their horses, burned their chariots, and ran up the standard of Israel. Thus thirty-two kings of Canaan bit the dust, and Israel was practical ruler of the land. By choice and lot the land was parcelled among the tribes, with the leaders, Judah and Ephraim, in the heart of the country. But Levites and priests received cities—forty-eight of them—distributed in all the land. As a center for religious worship, Shiloh is chosen. Now then, we have Israel in the promised land, settled by tribes, with the leaven of religion set at intervals, and the tabernacle at Shiloh. Hints at another method of conquest are found by some in Judges I and

2, though these may be subsequent to the entrance through the Jordan.

VI. *The downgrade movement.*—But isolated Canaanitish fortresses were tares in the wheat. At the close of one generation degeneration set in. The same language, similar customs, and continuous contact soon familiarized Israel with Canaanitish rites. The blandishments Canaan set a trap for the worshipers of Jehovah. Into the pitfall fell the victors, and into the coils of idols ran unwary Israel. Crushed almost to earth by Aramæan, Moabite, Philistine, Canaanite, Midian, and Ammon she successively cried, was delivered, reformed, deformed, and oppressed. Through a couple of centuries this despicable checkered mode of life continued. Down to the pit of despair, far below the marks of the preceding period, Israel sank and cried in dismay. Only the exigencies of a theory can construct any conceivable advances; the book of Judges does not reveal them. But God is not dead, the wails are heard, and a deliverer is found. These successive heroes, unlike as nature makes, only by God's direction and help did their mighty deeds. We find, too, an occasional prophet to keep alive the coal of consecration (Judges 4:4; 6:8; 13:6) and to point to the God of their fathers. In the early dawn, after this night of Israel's history, we meet Samuel, the seer.

VII. *The prophetic movement.*—The inspirited personality of this peer found and bound to itself young men of noble aim. So potent was his spirit that he soon gathered about him bands of youthful and useful enthusiasm and energy, and formed the nucleus of the most effective religious elements in Israel's later history. The bands of the sons of the prophets became the fountain-heads of religious influence and power, and perpetuated the spirit of their founder, Samuel, and the spirit of Jehovah, their inspirer, down to the end of prophecy.

VIII. *The monarchical movement.*—The peerless career of Samuel set Israel's ideals on a high pedestal. The corrupt beginnings of his sons were but threats of coming disaster. The amassings of Ammon, too, demanded some military movement. With a darkening future and rumors of invasion, Israel required a leader, a *king*, like their neighbors. Samuel receded from, but

Jehovah conceded to, their request, after due warning. Saul, a slightly Benjaminite, the people's choice of a man, was crowned amid the shouts of the nation. The one element of character which should control a king of Jehovah's people is *obedience to God*, prompt and unswerving. Success and security are built on this granite foundation. But Saul's pharisaic self-sufficiency and independence were incompatible with obedience. Open violation of God's commands was simply the undermining of his throne. Self-service is not God's service. Self-will is ill-will. Saul failed in the test, though twice made, and he was toppled from his royal seat. The patient prophet again sought a king, but now one of God's choosing. David, the shepherd lad, at Bethlehem was anointed and appointed successor to Saul. Years of jealousy, envy, danger, pursuit, skirmish, and battle marked the relations between Saul and David. But the final tragedy on Gilboa terminated a sad, a bad reign, doubly disastrous to king and land.

David, with God's permission, left his refuge in Philistia, climbed the Judean hills and was crowned king of Judah at Hebron. Off to the northwest within the battlements of Mahanaim, Saul's son was crowned king of Israel by General Abner. Now, we have an incipient dual kingdom. But David's kindly spirit, his politic manner, his frankness and large heart won universal confidence. By the expiration of seven years he had the hearts of all Israel. The strategic, central, and strong fortress of Jebus was stormed and taken, and David made this cluster of hills his capital under the name Jerusalem. David's religious character could not rest until ample provisions had been made for worship. The ark was transferred, interrupted by one sad fatality, to Jerusalem, and set down under a tent. The king and the people rent the air with their shouts of joy, and offered sacrifices of thanksgiving. David's superior generalship, the lack of interruption by great powers, and the comparative weakness of adjoining peoples, made rapid speed in the extension, in the pushing out of the boundaries of his kingdom. The fullest limits of the promised land are soon his own. But promotion is often dangerous. Self-strength is but weakness. David gave

way and fell a dastardly sinner before God. One sin never goes alone. Its fruitage filled his soul with bitterness and his days with woe. But the kingdom was thoroughly organized and firmly established. David also made ample provision for the perpetuity of its worship and the purity of its judiciary. Instead of building a temple, he gathered the materials, and was assured by Jehovah of his son's everlasting sonship, kingdom, and rule.

Solomon's kingship had a sincere, loyal, and faithful beginning. In a few years the temple was built and domestic alliances formed with every neighboring tribe. Solomon's inheritance was not only tied together with ties of royal making, but was more thoroughly and severely organized for the purposes of an absolute monarchy. At the same time the king's foreign affinities opened the doors of foreign commerce, and made Israel one of the peoples of the world of his day. About the year 1000 B.C., Israel was at the apex of her glory, politically, commercially, and socially, and was partially equipped for a thrifty religious growth. The body politic was maintained at high pressure, at a tensility touching the limits of endurance. But Israel now had a monarchy, absolute, unlimited, oppressive, king-centered, with God as nominal head, but with Solomon as the human, the fallible head. Into this body, however, were taken elements which were destined to breed disease, to cause eruptions and disruptions, and to call forth the best efforts of the prophets, the moral physicians of the God of Israel.